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VARIOUS FORMS
OF
PRURITUS CUTANEUS,
AND THEIR TREATMENT.

BY

R. W. TAYLOR, M. D.



Professor of Diseases of the Skin in the University of Vermont. Physi-
cian to Charity Hospital, N. Y.

Read before the Burlington Medical & Surgical Club, at Winooski, Vermont,
May 14th 1877.

(Reprinted from the Archives of Clinical Surgery, August, 1877.)

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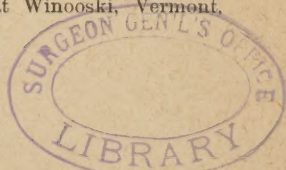
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Professor of Diseases of the Skin in the University of Vermont. Physician to Charity Hospital, N. Y.

In preparing the short paper, requested by your honorable body, on pruritus of the skin, I have limited myself to the consideration of that functional derangement in which there is itching of greater or less intensity without originally any lesion of the skin appreciable to the naked eye. I shall not, therefore, include that exudative papular disease named prurigo, nor shall I, other than incidentally, treat of itching as a complication of affections of the skin proper. Let me here remark, that one example of progress made in the study of skin diseases is offered by the subject of this paper, which was at one time called both prurigo and pruritus; while now it is proved that there is a distinct morbid entity called prurigo, with severe symptoms and visible lesion, and it is also clearly settled that there is a functional disorder of the skin without any primary lesion of that tissue, due to various causes, the symptom of which is, in short, itching. Pruritus of the skin or itching then, is not a disease, a morbid entity, but a functional disorder of that tissue occurring under the most varied circumstances. It is of especial importance in every case of this affection that its cause be as far as possible accurately determined, for upon the conclusions thus obtained many of the therapeutic indications are based.

* Read before the Burlington Medical & Surgical Club, at Winooski, Vermont, May 14th, 1877.

Allow me then, though I shall, undoubtedly, state facts well known to you, to sketch briefly the chief causes of pruritus, which I think can be arranged conveniently in the following manner :

1st. That itching which is caused by external agents, such as rough clothing, woollens (colored and otherwise), harsh friction, such as with towels, certain soaps and baths, and last, but not least important, certain parasites, chiefly animal, also vegetable.

2d. Pruritus from internal causes, such as Bright's diseases; visceral diseases, such as gastro-intestinal and hepatic, and sometimes pulmonary; and malaria; also from plethora and from that condition of suboxidation which is frequently an accompaniment of the gouty and rheumatic state, but which may exist without such complication, as a morbid condition, in which the process of destructive metamorphosis of the tissues is imperfectly performed, and we find as a tangible evidence of it, besides the symptoms of which itching is very often a prominent one, a great excess of such solid matters of the urine as urea, uric acid, and oxalate of lime. Then we may mention diabetes as a not infrequent cause of pruritus, which also is observed in the course of various nervous disorders and tumors in the brain and cord.

3d. The pruritus which follows certain affections of the skin, themselves being attended most frequently with itching, and burning combined with itching. These are the various erythematous affections, urticaria, eczema, scabies, pediculosis, measles, scarlatina, sometimes small pox, and heat eruptions.

4th. We have pruritus, caused in great part by the structure or conformation and condition of the parts involved, such as pruritus vulvae, pruritus ani, pruritus of scrotum, and femoro-scrotal pruritus; these, though largely induced, as said, by the condition of the parts, may also be induced or caused, or at least perpetuated by various other causes.

5th. There is the pruritus of old persons, in which there may or may not be visible lesion of the skin; sometimes, however, there is well marked atrophy; also, that itching of certain parts which from its development every winter has been called by Duhring and Handschuh, pruritus hiemalis. Finally, certain drugs, notably opium, induce cutaneous pruritus.

The chief importance of these facts consists in the indications which they suggest for the treatment of internal conditions, as well as for the removal of the causes which are ascertained to be in operation. Let us then briefly run over these general facts before we come to a consideration of the topical remedies in general.

First, then, as to external agents we all know that many persons can not bear the application of flannel to the skin, and I have frequently cured severe pruritus by simply ordering gauze cotton undershirts to be worn under flannel. The same may be caused by gloves and stockings, as many patients complain of great itching of the hands and feet from wearing these articles in woolen. One of the most severe cases of chapped hands seen by me during last winter, began as a pruritus, caused by an extra thick pair of woolen gloves. Blue and red woolen also have been observed to cause pruritus, which ceased when a white article was worn. Pruritus, mostly of an ephemeral character, however, has been known to be caused by the use of stimulant applications, and of soaps of a too caustic nature; also by the too vigorous use of ordinary soaps, particularly of such rough stimulating agents of the skin as flesh brushes, Turkish towels, etc. The scope of this paper does not permit a full consideration of the relation of parasites to itching, but to be moderately complete I must mention certain facts. Cases certainly come before us in which we are in great doubt as to whether the itching is caused by an insect or whether it is due to other causes. Thus it may be in a patient in whom the suspicion of lice would not usually be entertained, or again the lesions observed may not be well marked. These cases have often puzzled me, particularly in elderly people of the better class, especially where the itching has been rather generally distributed, for if it is localized, as for instance to the genitalia or anus, we have important aids to diagnosis. In these cases of more extensive pruritus, if the symptom is worse on the back, shoulders, over the scapulae and about the waist, where the clothes are drawn tight, the suspicion of pediculi, is to say the least, well warranted. Further, the skin must be carefully examined, and then if we find minute pin-head sized blood crusts, with little or no surrounding hyperaemia, we have almost positive evidence of a parasitic cause. I mention these facts at the risk even of being tedious, as so much importance depends upon a correct diagnosis, and again, as in some cases, we fail to find the pediculus itself, though sought for long and patiently. Having ascertained that the cause is the parasite, the first indication is to attack his habitat, namely, the clothes, which will be required to be ironed, particularly at the seams, or in some cases it may be necessary that they shall be boiled. I always direct that perfectly clean underclothes shall be worn after the application of remedies to the body. Of course, I cannot here enter into the treatment of Bright's disease in its varied forms; suffice it to say, that in certain cases of more or less extensive pruritus, this condition of the system

causes the cutaneous irritation, which is much relieved when the cause is reached by the various means which we use in that disease, and is further remedied by local applications. It is well, then, in cases of pruritus occurring in middle and advanced age, to look after the condition of the kidneys, especially if the cause of the symptoms is at all obscure and if any suspicion arises as to the presence of Bright's disease. The same general remarks in similar conditions apply to the search after hepatic disorder, malaria, phthisis, and chronic gastro-intestinal affections. I now call to mind a gentleman, who having a flatulent dyspepsia with acid eructations, had also pruritus of the trunk and thighs, which was much relieved when the condition of his digestive system was improved. I feel that I cannot lay too much stress upon that condition of the system in which pruritus is found in persons whose urine is of high specific gravity and heavily laden with those resulting products of suboxidation of the tissues, namely, uric acid and oxalate of lime, and again those in which there is an excess of urea, for among other well marked symptoms, pruritus is often a very distressing one, involving either large portions of the cutaneous surface, the extremities most frequently, and also upon the trunk, and also localized to the scrotum, to the scroto-femoral angle, and also to the anus. This condition, I think, will be found to be present in many cases of pruritus of the anus and of the genitals. The same state of the urine is also observed in gout and rheumatism, which diseases are often accompanied by pruritus, which however, is, I think, usually localized as to the parts just mentioned, in rheumatism more frequently than in gout, in which often large territories of skin become pruritic, and constitute a very distressing complication. In such cases as these attention to the diet is of first importance, the amount of albuminous and starchy food ingested must be carefully regulated; in fact, the diet must be plain and easily digestible. Fresh air and exercise have also much influence, and such therapeutic remedies as mercurial cathartics must be frequently used. But of the greatest importance is the prolonged use of alkalies, which must be administered with care and judgment, as I have said, for long periods. In my experience the acetate, citrate, or bi-carbonate of potassa have proved of greater value than have the soda salts, and in a few exceptional cases I have had success, where other remedies have failed, by giving dilute nitric acid in doses of from ten to forty drops, largely diluted in water, half an hour after meals, followed by chlorate of potassa in doses of from ten to thirty grains an hour after the taking of the acid. The action of these remedies, which combined as I have indicated is sometimes

strikingly beneficial, is probably by means of the oxygen which they supply to the blood and tissues, as shown in one particular by the notable decrease which takes place in the quantity of uric acid found in the urine.

The same general treatment, with care as to diet, exercise and fresh air is necessary for the plethoric state, as a remedy (of course, in part,) for the pruritus which may coexist with it. In this condition, the symptom pruritus generally involves large surfaces of skin; and in my experience, more particularly the flexor aspect of the limbs than the trunk, though sometimes, even not infrequently, it is limited to the genitalia and anus. Diabetes, as a cause of pruritus, is frequent and is difficult to treat. I know of no work or monograph which considers as fully as the importance of the subject merits, of the pruritus which is secondary to preexisting lesions of the skin, and I shall not here have the opportunity of supplying the want. In cases of children afflicted with oft recurring urticaria, a pruritus may be developed, which will render their future life miserable; hence the importance of carefully seeking the cause and of removing it. In such subjects every external source of irritation must be removed, and especial care must be paid for a long period to the condition of the skin. In like manner we must be on our guard in cases of chronic urticaria in the adult. The same care must be paid to avoid irritation and to allay any pruritus which may follow the exanthemata, which it not infrequently does, though enough stress is not laid upon it by authors. Woolens must not be worn next to the skin, and any and every source of irritation must be avoided. In these cases, though the patients be young, errors of suboxidation may be found to complicate the pruritus, and they should be treated in the same manner and as actively as in the adult.

I once convinced myself that a severe and general pruritus in a child, recently convalescent of scarlatina, was due to the preexisting irritation of the skin by the exanthemata, aggravated by the impaired function of the kidneys, secondary to the same cause, and an appropriate treatment brought relief and cure. When I speak, further on, of the local measures necessary for the relief of pruritus, I shall mention that treatment which is curative for the pruritus which sometimes follows measles which involves much space, and is often intense in character. The pruritus which is observed in eczematous patients, in spots which have been the seat of that trouble, and also in parts never thus affected, requires especial attention. If all traces of the eczema are not removed, such as thickening and scaling, proper treatment must be continued until the

parts appear normal. The general hygiene of the skin is in this condition especially necessary, and such underlying and often predisposing conditions as suboxidation, the rheumatic and gouty vice, malaria and plethora must be carefully sought for, and if found, sedulously treated. The pruritus which sometimes follows scabies is sometimes very distressing, and leads to the improper use of too stimulating applications. It is the duty of the physician to determine whether the itch insect has ceased to be the source of trouble, and to use such general, local, and if necessary, as is sometimes the case, internal measures as will bring relief. I cannot insist too strongly on this point, as I bear vividly in mind the cases of a refined man and woman, husband and wife, who accidentally contracted scabies, which was soon cured, and followed by a general and most intense pruritus, chiefly due to the severity of the applications which they continued to use long after the exciting cause had ceased. This point is of importance to be remembered, not only in the treatment of scabies, but also in some cases of eczema and psoriasis; indeed, we cannot, I think, exercise too much judgment and caution in the use of stimulating applications to the skin. The pruritus of the anus, scrotum, vulva, genito-femoral angle are largely caused by the coaptation of the parts and by the moisture peculiar to them, but also other conditions may be in operation, such as I have already pointed out, and as part of the treatment remedies must be addressed to their removal. I shall now only mention again, gout, visceral disease, the condition of suboxidation and diabetes. While these secondary causes are important, remedies addressed to their removal alone are not curative, and it is to these local spots of pruritus that topical remedies are most necessary and useful. The pruritus of old persons is often unattended with any deviation from health, which is recognizable, and hence is a condition difficult to treat intelligently, other than by topical means. In some cases we find a well marked atrophy of the skin. This tissue is then pale, thin, rather harsh and slightly scaly, and is the seat to a greater or less extent of itching, which is often very severe, particularly at night. This feature of nocturnal exacerbation is not peculiar to any form of pruritus, either accompanied or not by any lesion of the skin. In old persons, however, the rule is that the suffering is very severe and much worse at night than in the day time. As very little can be done, in the matter of internal treatment, for the winter pruritus or pruritus hiemalis, I shall say nothing of it here and only allude to it incidentally a little later on, when speaking of external treatment.

Such, then, is a brief review of the indications for internal treatment, and for the prophylaxis of that distressing functional affection of the skin, which, I repeat, we do not consider as a distinct disease, but rather a disorder. Let us now rapidly study the topical treatment which has proved most useful in the various forms of pruritus. Of course, the mode of our applications varies very much according as the itching is extensive or limited in its distribution, and according to the conformation of the parts. Where the trunk and extremities are involved, baths are of great benefit, not only for their direct, sedative effect upon the nerves of the skin, but also from their similar influence on the large nervous centres and the circulation. Warm water of various degrees is a direct sedative to the skin, and a further soothing influence may be gained by the addition of the mucilaginous portions of bran or of starch. To this, also, alkalies sal soda or borax may be often added with benefit.

Attention must be paid to the sensations of the patient, and also that when his flesh is dried it is not roughly rubbed, but rather carefully dried by slight pressure of the towel, which must be soft. I have known instances in which proper care not being used in administering the bath for pruritus, the reaction was so excessive that the sufferings of the patient were increased. As a sedative to the skin, applicable by means of a general bath, I know of no agent as good or certainly none better than the sulphuret of potassa, the only contra-indication to which is, its bad odor. Two to four ounces of this salt with one or two pounds of borax or sal soda, dissolved in thirty gallons of water, will form a bath suitable for severe and extensive cases of pruritus. This must be repeated generally at night, every day or every second day. It is always, in my judgment, well for the patient to lie down and rest, with moderate covering over him, after a bath, as exercise afterwards is followed by an aggravation of the symptoms. My practice is, that after the bath, the skin shall be well anointed, and I have used and can recommend, the following remedies:

R

Glycerin.,	-	-	-	-	-	℥iv.
Acid. carbol.,	-	-	-	-	-	℥i.
Ext. bellad.,	-	-	-	-	-	gr. xx.
Aq.,	-	-	-	-	-	℥ss.

M.

This must be well but carefully rubbed in the skin until it has a soft, unctuous feel. Then again, equal parts of vaseline and glycerine with one drachm of carbolic acid to each four ounces of the ointment is some-

times productive of great relief. Indeed, I think, that oftentimes the simple inunction of a pure oil, such as almond or olive oil, until the skin is quite greasy, is all that will be required after the bath. Not only should this inunction be used once daily after the bath, but also several times during the day, taking care that too much friction is not used. In the pruritus of old persons, especially with atrophic skin, this treatment is valuable, and is further beneficial in nearly all cases of extensive development. Some difficulty is always experienced in cases of extensive trouble in adapting the remedy, and in its application; but it can be overcome by patience and care. In the pruritus of old persons, also in that following pediculi, and again in public practice in general, I have used largely and generally with marked benefit, so that it has become to me a standard formula, the following preparation of carbolic acid, which drug I have come to regard as one of the most valuable agents for allaying cutaneous hyperaesthesia, which we possess:

℞

Acid. carbol,	-	-	℥ii to ℥iv.
Glycerin.	-	-	℥ii.
Aq.,	-	-	℥vi.

M.

This is to be carefully sopped on the itching surface, until it is quite soft and unctuous. Again, there are cases in which fatty matters are useful, combined with carbolic acid. Such prescriptions as follow have proved more or less efficacious in my hands:

℞

Vaseline,	-	-	-	-
Ung. simplicis,	-	-	aa.	℥ii.
Acid. carbol.,	-	-	-	℥iss.

M.

This must be well, but gently, rubbed in. Then again, I have derived benefit from a mixture of equal parts of vaseline and glycerine: indeed, it is sometimes wonderful how much relief is obtained by these simple fatty inunctions. I should especially recommend that you bear them in mind to be used alone or following the bath, either plain or medicated.

I may further add that I have reason to regard the sulphuret of potassa as an agent worthy of trial in the form of a lotion, and would suggest the following prescription:

℞

Sulphuret potassae,	-	-	-	℥ iii
Spts. camphor,	-	-	-	℥ ss.
Glycerin.,	-	-	-	℥ i
Aq. q.s. ad.	-	-	-	℥ vi

M.

This may be gently applied to the itching surface and perhaps kept in coaptation by means of layers of lint saturated with it. The next important agent, indeed one of our most valuable for the relief of itching in almost any form, is tar and its preparations. For large surfaces in those cases in which ointments may be for any reason not useful, we can apply it as a lotion by using the French liquid called Goudron de Guyot, diluted with water, to which, according to my preference, about one-eight part of glycerine has been added.

This Goudron de Guyot is an alkaline solution of tar, readily miscible with water, without turbidity. I have used it as strong as one ounce to seven of glycerine and water, and even as strong as two ounces to the same quantity. This makes an admirable lotion, which can be freely and continuously applied to the parts. For severe cases it is necessary to repeat the application several times daily, and to supplement its use by that of the bath. If applied without glycerine, the skin becomes after a time, hard and tense, and the sufferings are increased. I always, when using this or any preparation of tar for a length of time, advise one or two inunctions with one of the oily mixtures already spoken of. Another very excellent preparation of tar, which possesses the great advantage of mixing with water in any quantity, is called by its inventor, Dr. Bulkley, liquor picis alkalinus. Being more concentrated and more alkaline than the French preparation, it is to be preferred in general. Its formula is :

℞

Picis liquidæ,	-	-	-	℥ ii.
Potassæ causticæ,	-	-	-	℥ i.
Aq. destillat,	-	-	-	℥ v.

M., and strain.

This must certainly, in pruritus, always be diluted, and I have used it in proportions of from two drachms to half an ounce to eight ounces of water. As an anti-pruritic of tar and potash, it is, to my mind, very valuable, and can be relied upon in a vast number of cases to relieve this distressing symptom. Its ready miscibility is also a great desideratum. This lotion, also mixed with glycerine, may be used on

large and small surfaces, in combination with baths and inunctions, as the case requires. Further than this preparation of tar we have oil of tar, oil of cade, and oil of white birch or *oleum betulla alba* or oil *Rusci*. These can only be used in the form of ointment or mixed with glycerine and vaseline. The proportion most useful in my experience is one drachm of tarry oil to the ounce of fatty substance. The fatty substance may vary; thus you will sometimes find it advantageous to use the ointment of ozide of zinc, also an ointment composed of precipitated chalk, one drachm; simple cerate, one ounce; or you may order the sub-nitrate of bismuth instead of the chalk. This combination mixed with one of the tarry oils in the proportion mentioned, will, sometimes, indeed often, be of great service, not only in pruritus, but in cases in which this symptom is present with a well marked affection of the skin. Experience has shown that camphor possesses antipruritic powers of no light order. It may be variously used. In certain simple cases of itching, the ordinary camphor water answers a good purpose, particularly in children. It may be used as an ointment in the proportion of from one half to one drachm to the ounce, or it may be added to either of the above mentioned tarry ointments. The spirits of camphor in a mixture such as follows, is often of great value :

℞

Spts. camph.,	-	-	-	-	-	℥ss.
Boracis,	-	-	-	-	-	℥ii.
Aq.,	-	-	-	-	-	℥vi.
Glycerin.	-	-	-	-	-	℥ii.

M.

Care must always be taken that the mixture is well shaken. Though not extensively used iodoform has proved to be an antipruritic of some value. It may be used as an ointment in the proportion of one drachm to the ounce; and also as a lotion, which by the way, has been of marked benefit in my hands in pruritus of the vulva and of the anus. The formula is :

℞

Iodoform,	-	-	-	-	-	℥i.
Ether. sulphuric,	-	-	-	-	-	℥ii.
Glycerin.	-	-	-	-	-	℥i.

M.

The iodoform must be finely powdered. The parts are to be well moistened with this lotion and then covered with a layer of lint, wet in cold water. Perhaps, in certain cases of extensive pruritus, this lotion

may prove of equal value. I need not enter fully into a further consideration of this agent. Within a few years, a combination of camphor and chloral has been much used, and with benefit, as an antipruritic. The preparation is formed by the addition of about an equal amount of chloral to a given quantity of finely powdered camphor; the result is a syrupy liquid of pungent smell and taste, which, undiluted, has proved of great benefit in severe neuralgia, and even in certain extreme cases of pruritus. As a rule, it is well to use it in the proportion of from one to three drachms to the ounce of glycerine, vaseline, or cold cream, and then gently rubbed several times a day upon the itchy parts. It can also be diluted with water and glycerine, and then forms a most valuable antipruritic lotion, as follows :

\mathcal{R}	Chloral camphor,	-	-	-	\mathfrak{Z} ss.
	Glycerin.	-	-	-	\mathfrak{Z} iss.
	Aq.	-	-	-	\mathfrak{Z} vi.

M.

This may be applied to the parts, and also on lint. Then we must bear in mind the ethers, namely; sulphuric ether, chloric ether and chloroform, as they sometimes succeed where other agents fail. They may be used either in the form of ointment or of lotion, which may be made best of glycerine and water. These agents are sometimes of benefit, in a dilute state, in pruritus vulvae and ani. Let us not fail to mention the dilute hydrocyanic acid in a solution of borax or combined with camphor, as an excellent remedy for certain mild forms of pruritus :

\mathcal{R}	Acid hydrocyanic dil,	-	\mathfrak{Z} ss. to \mathfrak{Z} i.
	Spts. camphor,	-	\mathfrak{Z} ii. to \mathfrak{Z} ss.
	Glycerin.	-	\mathfrak{Z} i.
	Aq.,	-	\mathfrak{Z} iii.

M.

Sub-nitrate of bismuth or calamine, or precipitated chalk, in the proportion of two drachms to the four ounces of the foregoing mixture, may often be added with benefit. Then again cyanide of potassium may be useful, in cases of limited extent, used with caution and generally not stronger than one drachm to four ounces of water. In cases of limited extent the old black wash is often very beneficial, and it has in my experience often cured severe instances of intertrigo. It is well in a condi-

tion which we treat to some extent empirically to bear in mind all remedies which have done good, so I shall not fail to mention vinegar, a domestic remedy of some repute, used pure or diluted, or the fluid extract of hammamelis or witch hazel, which I believe, being introduced by our homœopathic brethren, has become a household remedy and is especially well thought of by the laity for itching of the skin and for burns and scalds. Pure water also may prove useful. I have had in some cases of extensive, and in many of limited pruritus, marked results from the following prescription, which relieved when camphor and tarry preparations aggravated.

R

Fol. belladonnae,	-	-	-	
Fol. hyosciami,	-	-	-	aa. ℥ ii.
Fol. aconiti,	-	-	-	℥ i.
Acid acetic,	-	-	-	℥ viii.

M.

The leaves must be reduced to a tolerably fine powder and then mixed with the acid and allowed to macerate two weeks. When ready it forms a heavy dark colored liquid of pungent smell. Of this, two fluid drachms to the gill of water makes a very efficacious anti-pruritic, and a greater strength even may be used. I have sometimes seen the power of this lotion increased by the addition of two drachms more of acetic acid. In some severe cases of pruritus vulvæ and ani I have seen relief obtained by painting the parts, previously well washed, with a mixture of equal parts of this combination and glycerine. This may be done twice a day, and in the meantime an ointment composed of one drachm of the same combination and one ounce of simple cerate may be applied on lint. I shall merely mention, to render my list as complete as possible, the extracts of belladonna and of aconite, tincture of aconite, aconitine and veratrine, the directions for the use of which in various forms are given in the text books. In the same class we have the preparations of opium, of which I sometimes use morphine in solution, at others a solution of the watery extract of opium. These agents however rarely answer well alone, but are useful at times as adjuvants. It may appear unnecessary, but my faith in its effects prompts me to mention particularly, the old lead and opium wash, which modified as follows, is oftentimes of service as a cutaneous application :

℞

Tr. opii,	-	-	-	-	-	℥i.
Spts. camphor,	-	-	-	-	-	℥ss.
Liq. plumbi subacet,	-	-	-	-	-	℥i.
Glycerinæ,	-	-	-	-	-	℥iss.
Aq. q. s. ad.,	-	-	-	-	-	℥vii.

M.

To be applied continuously on lint. If to this we add half an ounce of the subnitrate of bismuth we have one of the most reliable and efficacious lotions for that common affection of hot weather, prickly heat, which I have ever used, and I speak feelingly. It may be well to mention general tan-baths as being indicated in some cases, and the infusion of quassia as a lotion well spoken of by some writers.

I have been struck with the great relief often produced by preparations of the oils of peppermint or spearmint. They often relieve itching instantly and induce a delightful sensation of coolness. It is not well to use the oils in a pure state but rather the essences variously diluted with water. In severe cases equal parts of essences of peppermint and glycerine are very efficacious painted on the parts with a camel's hair pencil. The oils may be used in the form of ointment in the proportion of from half to one drachm to the ounce of simple cerate.

There are several anti-pruritic powders which are sometimes indispensable. The most important is that which is commonly called Anderson's powder. It is formed as follows :

℞

Pulv. amyli,	-	-	-	-	-	℥i.
Pulv. camph.,	-	-	-	-	-	℥iss.
Zinci oxd.,	-	-	-	-	-	℥ss.

M.

This must be carefully made, the camphor being reduced to an impalpable powder and then thoroughly incorporated with the other ingredients. It may be either lightly dusted upon the parts, or it may be quite copiously rubbed into the meshes of linen lint and then applied. The proportions may be altered either by increase or diminution. Then there are rice powders, lycopodium, subnitrate of bismuth, calamine, and prepared chalk.

It now remains for me to treat briefly of the pruritus of the vulva and of the anus. Space will not admit of a consideration here of the necessities for treatment of the parts in anatomical connection with these

regions, and such is unnecessary as the subject of pruritus vulvae is treated of in the most thorough and graphic manner in Dr. Thomas' classical work on diseases of women ; and as all surgeons in their work speak of the rectal affections often coexistent with pruritus ani. To begin with the pruritus of the vulvae, injections into the vulvae are generally indispensable. Infusion of tobacco injected very warm and copiously, is spoken of by many, and Dr. Butt of Alabama recently stated that he derived benefit, where all other remedies had failed, by using a hot tar tansy poultice. Copious injections of hot water followed by the application of linen cloths, wrung out in hot water, are also worthy of mention, while we have the authority of Dr. Gill, of St. Louis, for the use of nitrate of alumina, five to ten grains to the ounce of water, as a vaginal injection. In my own practice I have seen marked benefit from the use alternately of very hot and very cold water, followed by the continuous application of lead and opium wash. Alkaline injections, of course very hot, made by adding either sal soda or borax, are of frequent service, and very dilute solutions of Goulard's extract are excellent as vaginal injections. It may be necessary in some of these cases to tampon the vagina, as such has been known to do good ; in any case, I think it is absolutely necessary to keep the lips of the vulvae separated by means of a folded piece of soft linen or of linen lint. Of course, any secretion from above must be traced to its origin and looked after ; the urine must be carefully examined and the condition of the rectum noted. Any abnormality requires treatment as imperatively as does the vulval symptom. I shall here merely allude to the various remedies already considered and mention a few which are particularly applicable. First, let me say, that in many cases of vulval pruritus, ointments and fatty preparations are harmful, and that generally aqueous ones and liquids do good. The solution of cyanide of potassium, or the hydrocyanic acid combination have been used with success, as has also the lead and opium wash, with or without camphor and black wash. Dr. Thomas gives the following very useful formula, the chief agent of which is corrosive sublimate, which as a solution with various adjuncts has been extensively used as an anti-pruritic :

R

Hyd. bichloridi	-	-	-	-	3ss.
Tr. opii	-	-	-	-	3ss.
Aquae	-	-	-	-	3vii.

M.

This should be sopped on the parts freely and then kept continuously

applied on lint. I have used this salt in various forms for pruritus, and have come to regard it as of benefit quite frequently. It must always be used cautiously, especially on a surface of some size. Solutions of nitrate of silver deserve especial mention, applied in various strengths, sometimes particularly in old cases with much thickening of the mucous membrane as strong as from one half, to a drachm and a half, to the ounce of water. The parts are to be painted carefully and then kept apart by lint soaked in water or any lotion used rather less frequently. But still of great value if judiciously and well applied are solutions of caustic potassa and soda of strengths similar to those of the nitrate of silver.

These are generally indicated in old cases with much mucous membrane hypertrophy. When this latter condition exists, it is fair to say that the itching will continue as long as it is not especially treated, and that the symptoms will generally be relieved in proportion as the thickening grows less.

Suppositories either rectal or vaginal may be remembered, for which we have numberless ingredients, some of which I have mentioned. My friend Dr. F. Leroy Satterlee has used with more than ordinary benefit as a local application by means of a brush, the fluid extract of conium. This drug is to my mind capable of extensive application either in the form of an infusion used after the manner of the tobacco preparation, of an ointment made of the solid extract, or in the form of the fluid extract of which Dr. Satterlee speaks so confidently. It occurs to me that perhaps the preparation of which I have already given the formula, being composed of acetic acid, belladonna, leaves, et cetera, may be rendered more efficacious by the addition of conium. Certainly this narcotic vinegar can be used with good results in valval pruritus, both largely diluted as a vaginal injection and of greater strength for continuous application. As a curiosity I may mention the astonishing cure of an aggravated case of pruritus valvae, occurring during pregnancy, in which upon two occasions instantaneous and prolonged relief followed the smoking of a cigar. The full details of the case are to be found in Dr. Thomas' work. I need not mention all of the various ointments which have been used and found to be of more or less ephemeral effect, except to say, that it is sometimes well to try certain of those in which a mercurial salt is an ingredient, notably diluted citrine ointment, and a mild calomel ointment. It is well, also, to remember prominently carbolic acid and iodoform as being often useful. As a rule, tarry applications are harmful, but the chloral camphor combination, diluted, has been known to do good. Much relief, if even temporary,

may be produced by spraying the parts, for which purpose a slightly stimulating and anodyne solution is indicated. This procedure may be used also in cases of pruritus ani, and the idea suggests itself that to spray many large itching surfaces with other preparations may also be worthy of a trial. I have not thus far mentioned iodine, as its use is restricted to small spots, and it may be used in the cases under consideration in various forms. The older writers speak well of yellow wash, therefore it is well to place it in our repertorium. Many of the remedies useful in pruritus of the vulva are also of service in itching of the anus. In treating this distressing symptom not only must the general condition of the patient be looked after, but care must be taken to ascertain the state of the rectum and parts surrounding. Any lesion of the anus and rectum must be especially treated. The various lotions, ointments, and applications previously spoken of may be tried. I may mention as deserving of praise the salve called by Bryant unguentum metallorum, composed of equal parts of oxide of zinc ointment, citrine ointment, and lead ointment. Tarry applications may be of benefit, especially if combined with powdered nutgalls. Injections into the rectum, simple or medicated, may also give relief, while for occasional use suppositories may be borne in mind. Much benefit often follows the application to the anus of a sponge wrung out in very cold water. I may also especially mention iodoform and carbolic acid, which singly or combined form a valuable application if incorporated with the officinal lead ointment in varying strength, as the cases suggest. Many more formulae might be given, but I think that if some of those already enumerated are judiciously used, relief will be obtained.

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